

Jan 3rd 1829

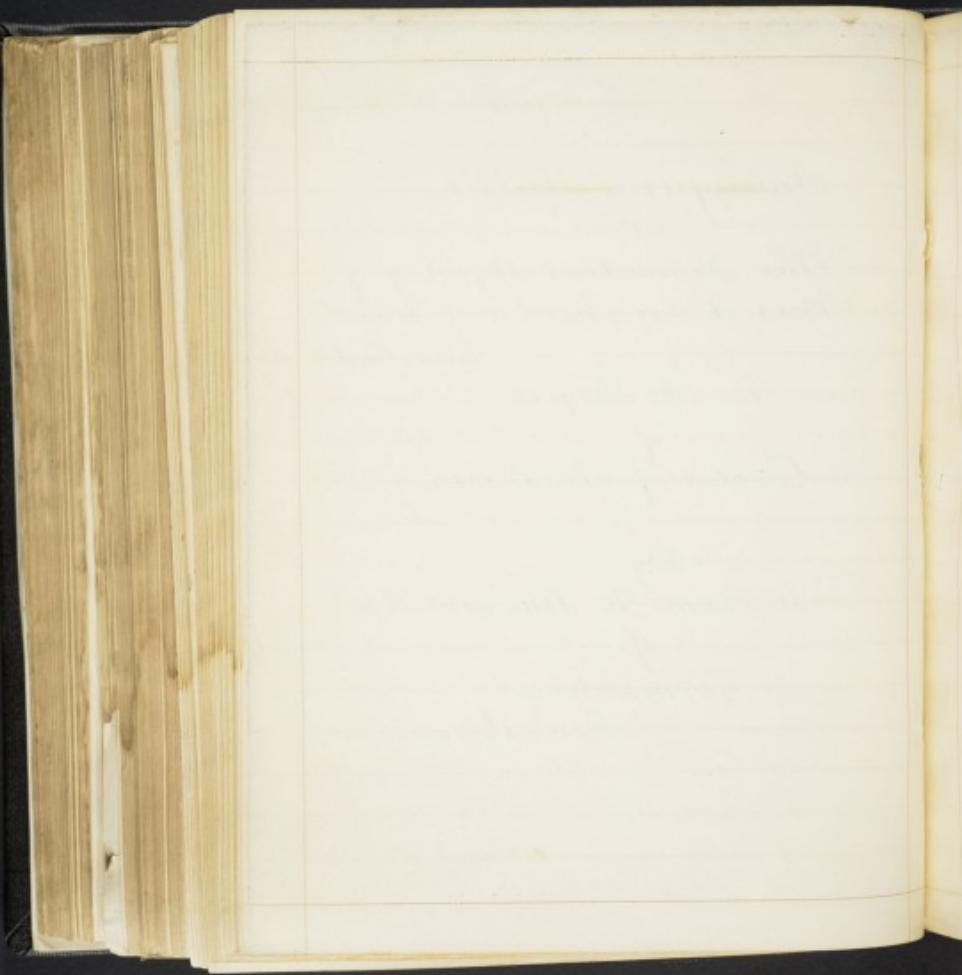
No 68 Box

Abb Smith 6th st.

Inaugural Thesis
on
The Remedial Agency of
Musick in Mental Disease.
Approved March 9. 1829
For the Degree
of
Doctor of Medicine.

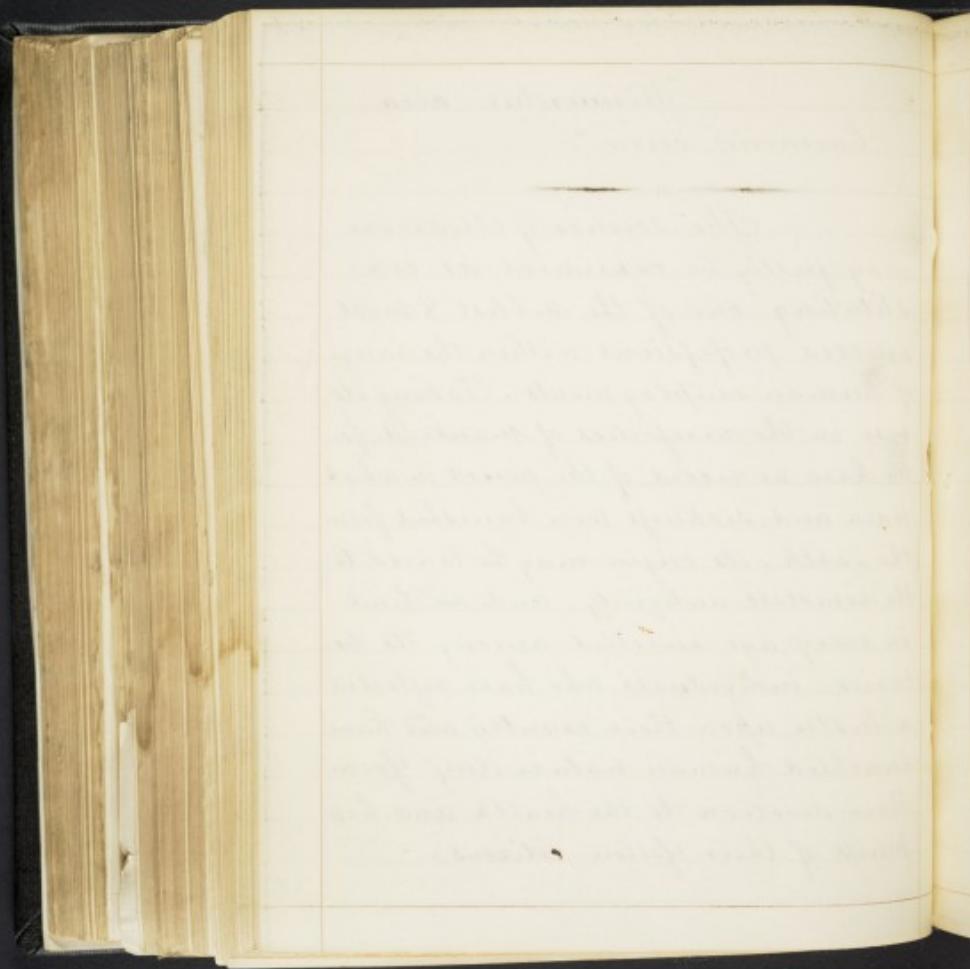
By
William W. Johnson A.B.
of
Germantown.
Pennsylvania.

sufficient - as far as it goes -

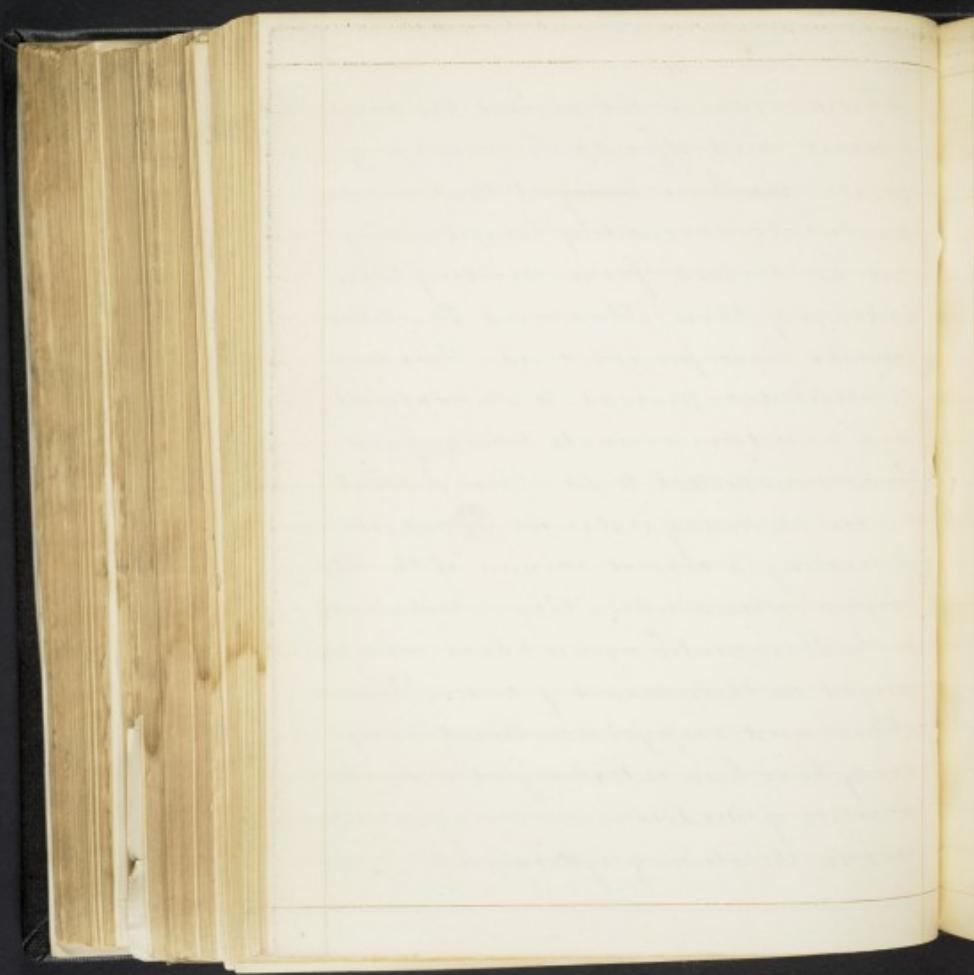


"Minuntur atra
Carmine cura".

The science of medicine may justly be considered as constituting one of the noblest & most exacted professions within the range of human employments. Taking its rise in the necessities of mankind, for we have no record of the period in which pain and sickness were banished from the earth, its origin may be traced to the remotest antiquity, and we find in every age enrolled among its banties, individuals who have reflected a lustre upon their country and have ennobled human nature itself from their devotion to the health and happiness of their fellow citizens.



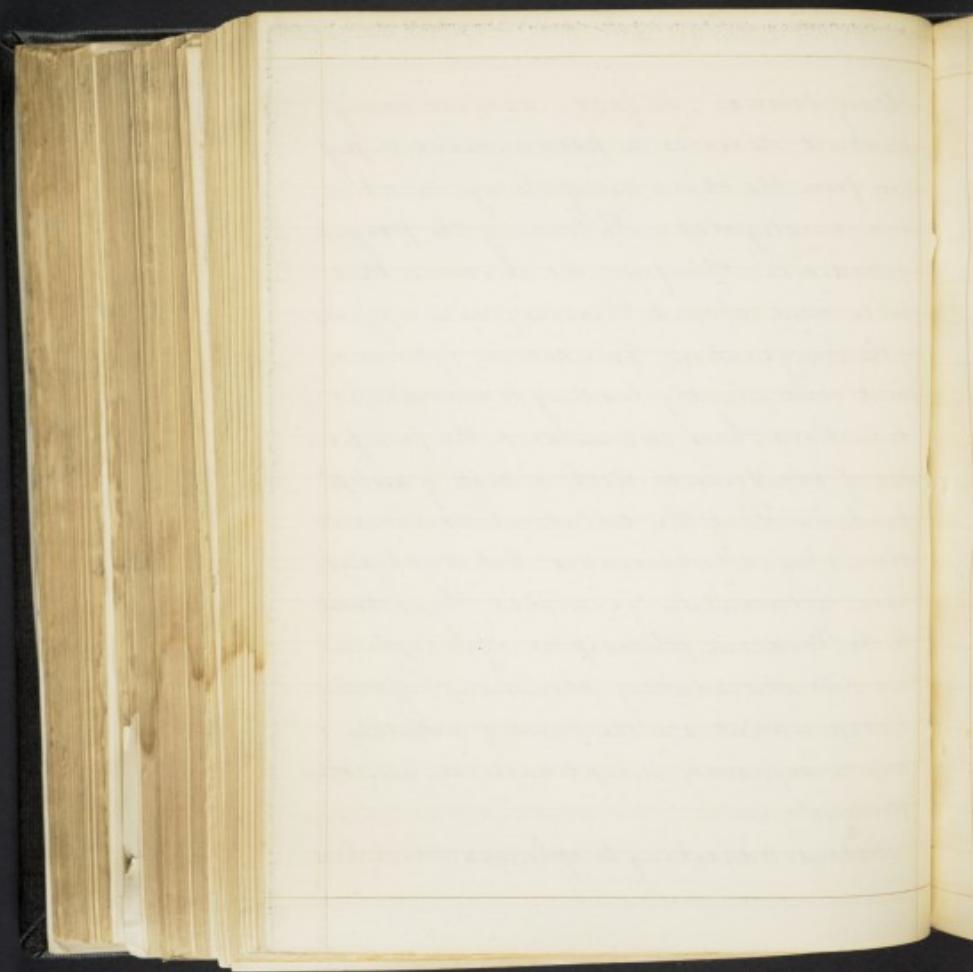
Whilst, however, we award the Meed
of merit and offer up the homage of
praise, we have to regret that a com-
miserate amount of benefit, may
not be derived from reverting to the
writings of those illustrious Practition-
ers who have preceded us. This may
be attributed, perhaps, to the confused
and uncertain accounts which have
been transmitted to us, through which
we are, in many instances, incapable
of forming a correct opinion of the Phys-
iological views which they entertained,
or the Therapeutic agents which were em-
ployed in their means of cure. Super-
stition and empiricism must neces-
sarily have been intermingled with the
practice of Medicine, in an age cul-
minated in the gloom of ignorance.



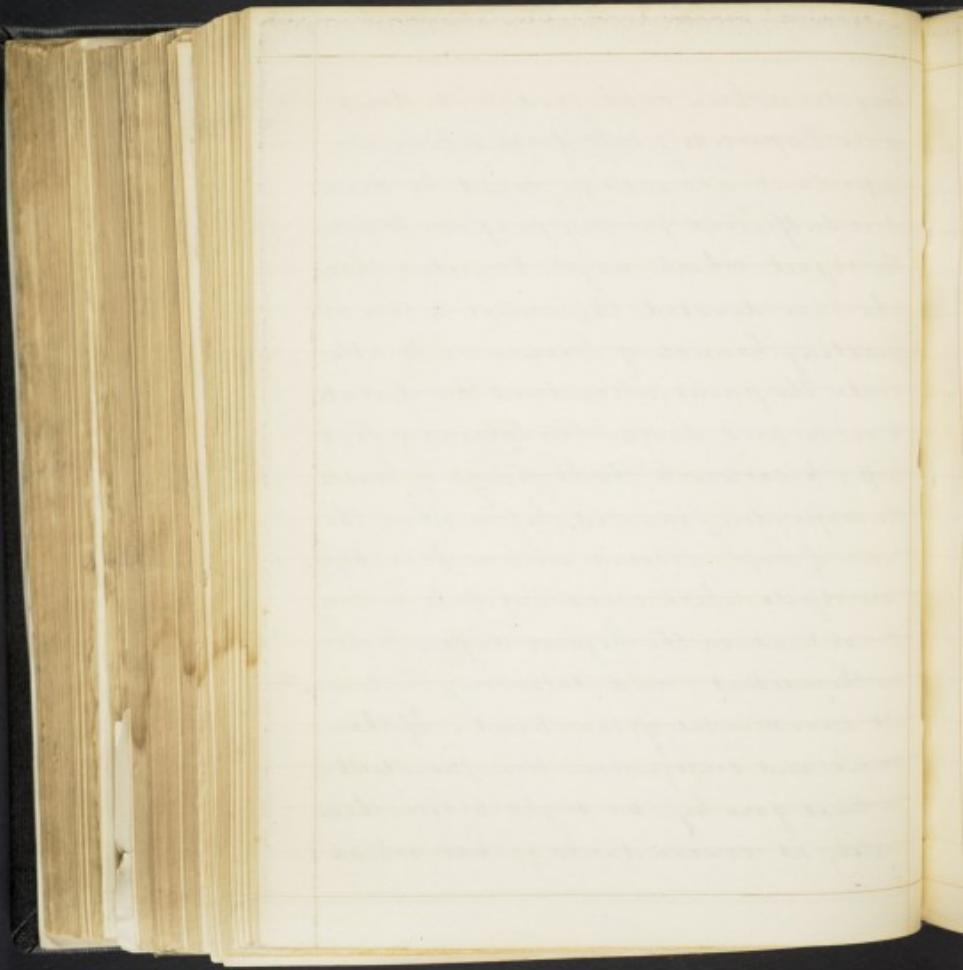
5

Every science, in fact, almost every pursued receives a predominant impression from the character of the age in which it is investigated. In tracing the progress of medicine, therefore, we discover that false and absurd theories, mere vagaries of the imagination, founded in ignorance and consequently leading to erroneous deductions, have encumbered the fair fabric of our science with a mass of useless lumber. Thus the collateral sciences as Chemistry, Mathematics & Metaphysics have alternately furnished hypotheses to the Medical philosopher, for explaining and elucidating phenomena essentially dependant on the laws of vitality, and consequently inexplicable on any other principle.

Without advertizing to opinions which have



long since been consigned to "the tomb
of the Capulets"; and from which no
important advantage could be derived,
it is sufficient for my purpose to notice
the object which urged & incited those
who have devoted themselves to this in-
teresting branch of Science. - To allevi-
ate the pains attendant on disease,
to calm and soothe the sorrows of sick-
ness, to restore to the blessings of health
the desponding invalid before whom the
taper of hope gleamed with a fitful light,
are objects which could not fail of being
considered in the highest degree, noble
in themselves, and deserving the warm-
est emotions of mankind. If, then,
error and empiricism were prevalent
in times gone by, we ought to view them
merely as concomitants of that which

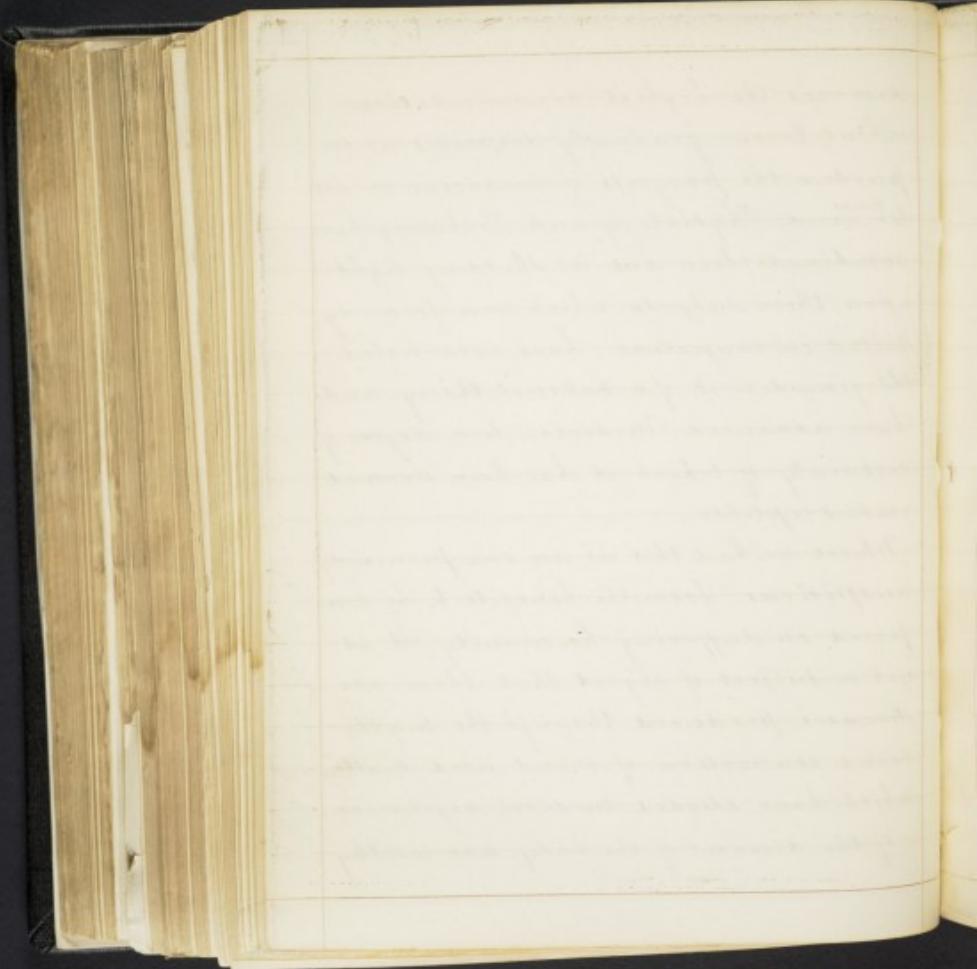


3

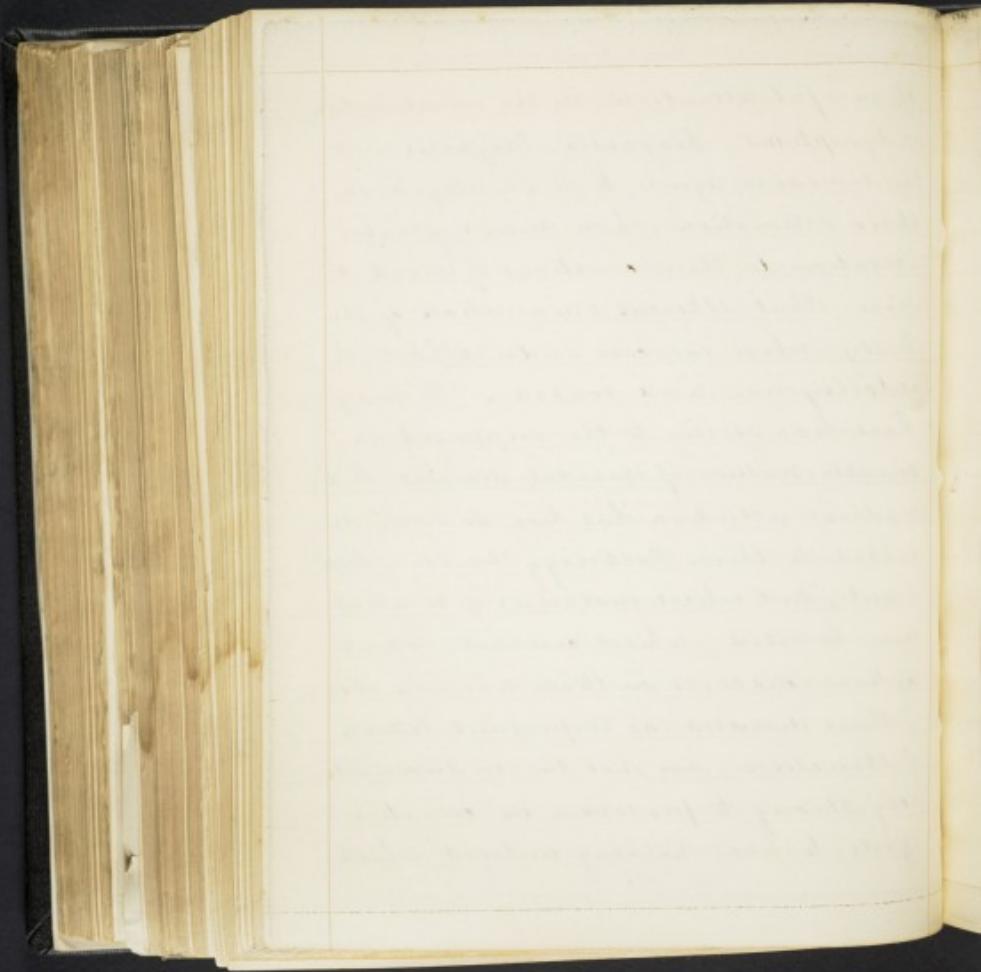
deserves the highest commendation.
But error gradually disperses as we
pursue the progress of Medicine in lat-
ter ^{times} and Physiology and Pathology have
combined their aid in shedding light
upon those subjects which were formerly
veiled in conjecture, have established
the ground-work of a rational theory, and
have advanced Medicine to a degree of
certainty of which it had been deemed
inaccessible.

Whilst we hail this as an era peculiarly
auspicious from the benefits to be con-
ferred on suffering humanity, it is
yet a subject of regret, that there are
diseases, produced through the myste-
rious connection of Mind and Matter,
which have eluded Medical vigilance.

If the diseases of the body are worthy

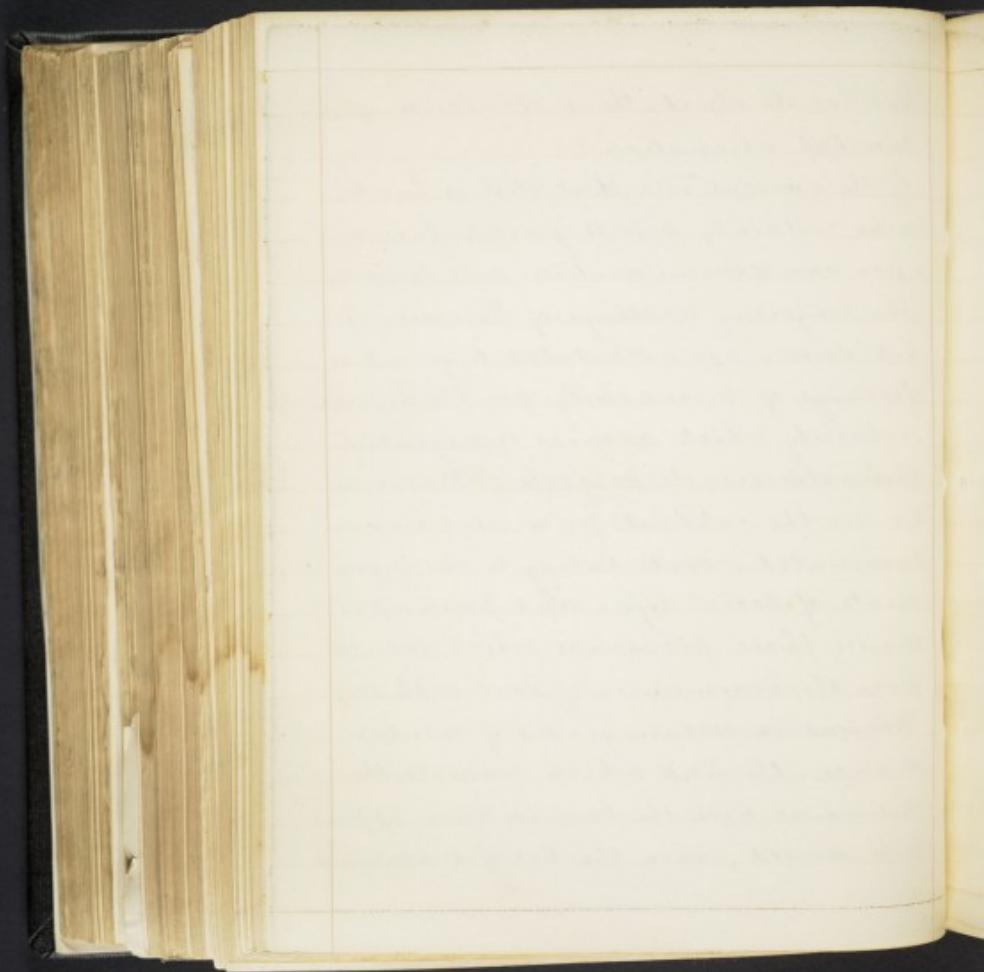


of careful attention, in the enumeration
of symptoms, Diagnosis, Prognosis and
the remedial agents to be employed in
their alleviation, have much greater
attention to the aberrations of mind de-
serve, than ethereal emanation of the
Deity, whose exercise endows us with
intelligence and reason. It may
have been owing to the supposed in-
curable nature of mental diseases, that
medical attention has been so little di-
rected to their Pathology & mode of treat-
ment, but whilst instances of recovery
may be cited, whilst cerebral exani-
ninations discover in those who have died
of these diseases no important lesion
of structure, are not the inducements
very strong to persevere in curative
efforts, to leave nothing untried which



Has for its object, the restoration of
mental alienation?

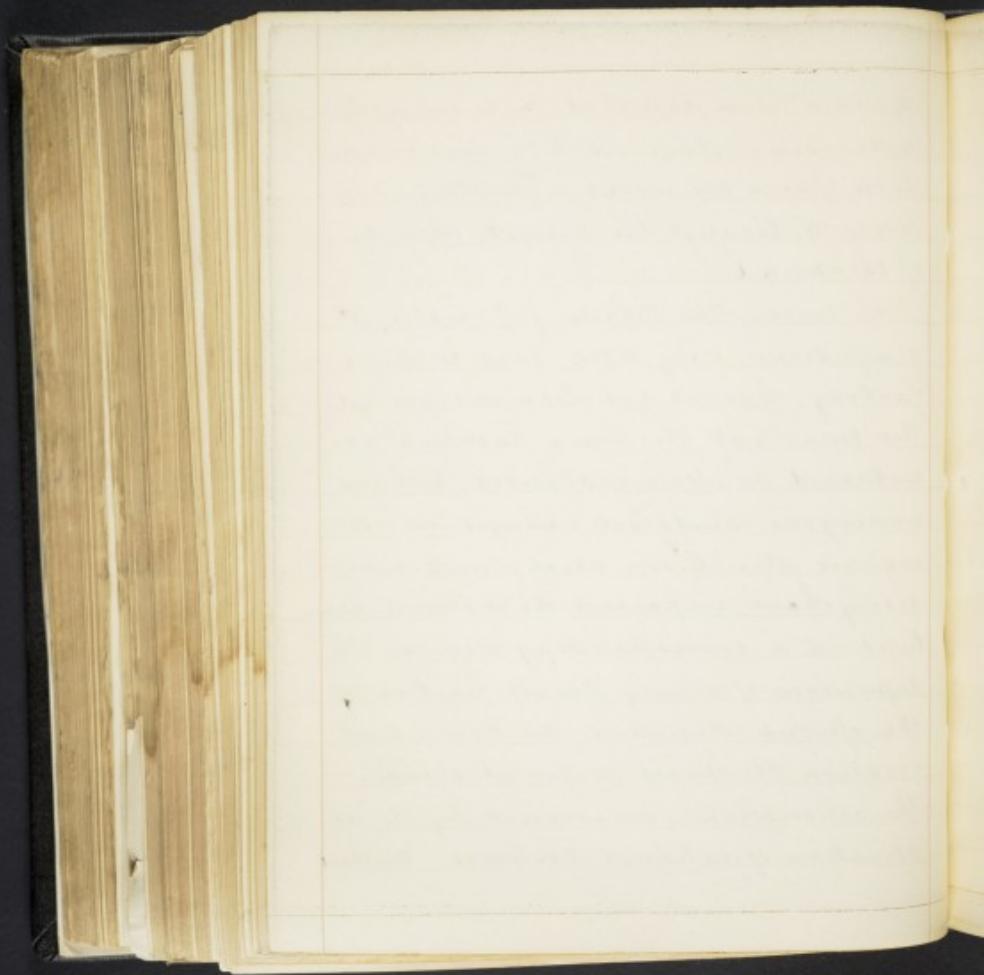
Of the various "ills that flesh is heir to," none certainly possess greater claims upon our consideration and sympathy. The lingering wastings of Phthisis, slow but sure, are calculated to awaken feelings of melancholy for the helplessness, certainty which almost invariably characterizes its progress. But here we see the intellect pale and uncomplimented, contributing to the enjoyments of social life, and participating in those pleasures which result from the communion of soul with soul. Whereas in certain grades of muscular disease, the link which connects the individual with the human race appears to be severed, even the ties of consanguinity



8

ity have been dissolved & the unfortunate being, doomed to a rigid seclusion from the world - sufficient of itself to derange the delicate structure of the mind.

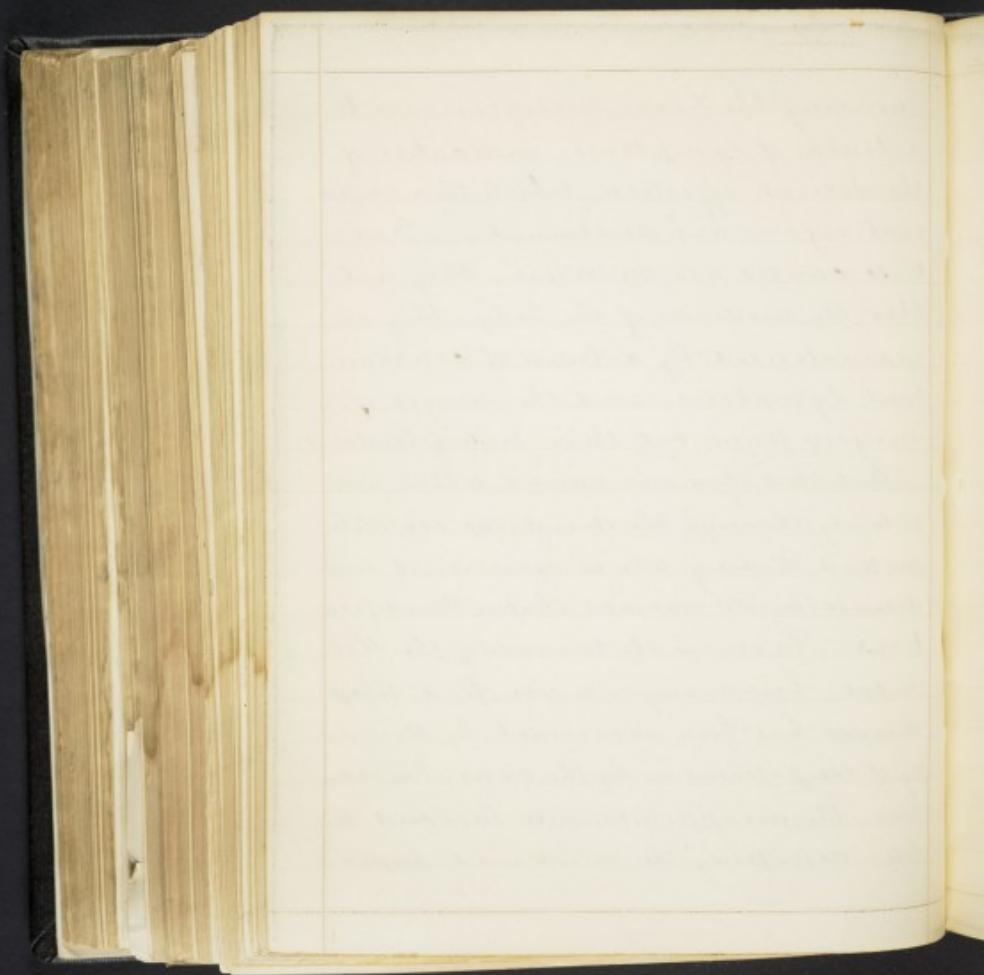
In tracing the Pathology of this class of affections, very little that is satisfactory, has as yet been discovered. 'Tis true that the brain has been ascertained in some instances, to have undergone material changes in its organic structure, which must necessarily have impaired its moral functions in a corresponding degree. The depression of a very small portion of the osseous structure, we know, will occasion the most profound coma. The concussion, occasioned by the application of external violence, without



7

injuring the bone, will give rise to a train of symptoms, indicative of the serious affection, which this important organ has sustained. — But these causes are material, they act thro' the medium of the body, they are characterised by a train of concomitant symptoms, and the annals of surgery point out their mode of treatment.

But that there are causes which act entirely through the mind, no one will pretend to deny who is conversant with disease in its various shapes & modifications. Examine the tenants of the Hospital, how many will you find, whose disease has been occasioned by the agony of the passions — by the cares, the troublies, the disappointments incident to life, depressing the mind and super-



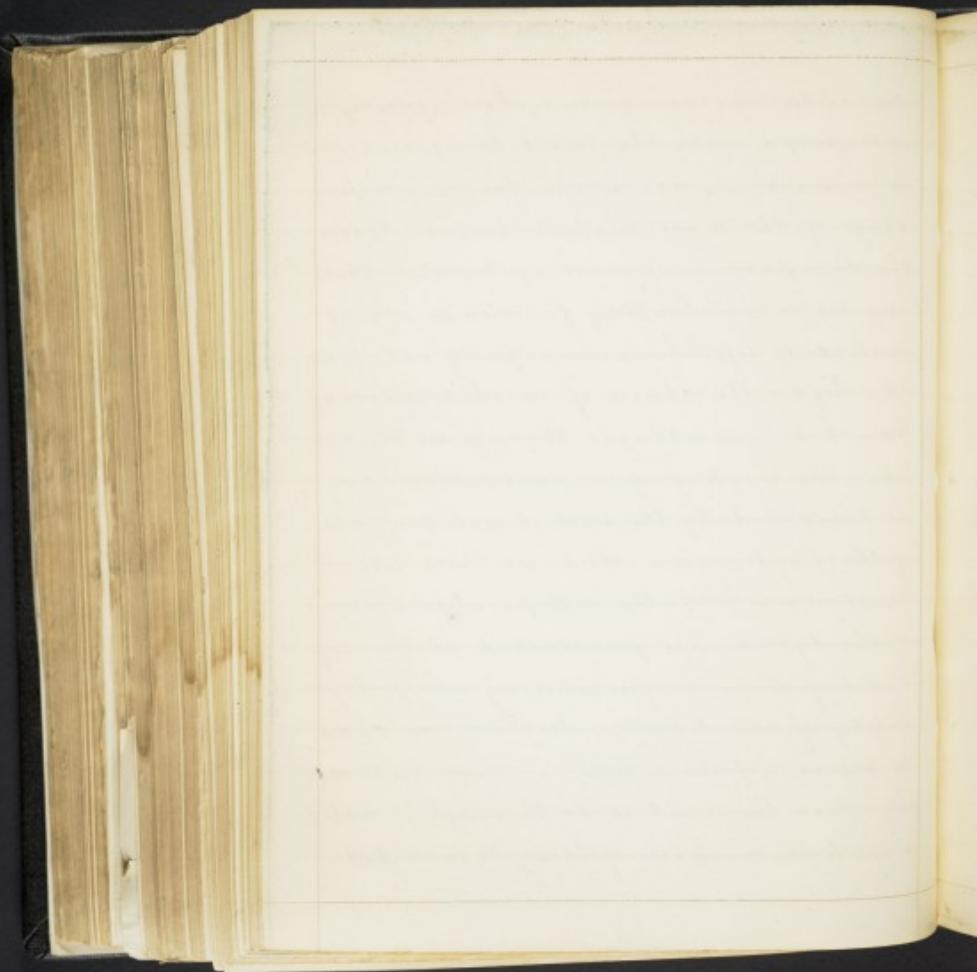
- inducing in this indirect manner, an affection of the body. — The elation occasioned by a paroxysm of joy, has produced a corresponding effect, overthrowing the seat of reason and converting the smile of delight into the unmeaning yell of the demoniac. How these astonishing effects are produced, were presumptuous in me to attempt to explain, but content with the fact it should be the object of the Philanthropist to indicate those means which afford the greatest probability, if not of relieving, at least of soothing and calming the perturbation of Spirits, of tranquillizing the system & of inducing a state of comparative happiness and repose.

There are grades or stages of Mania, in which I am convinced that

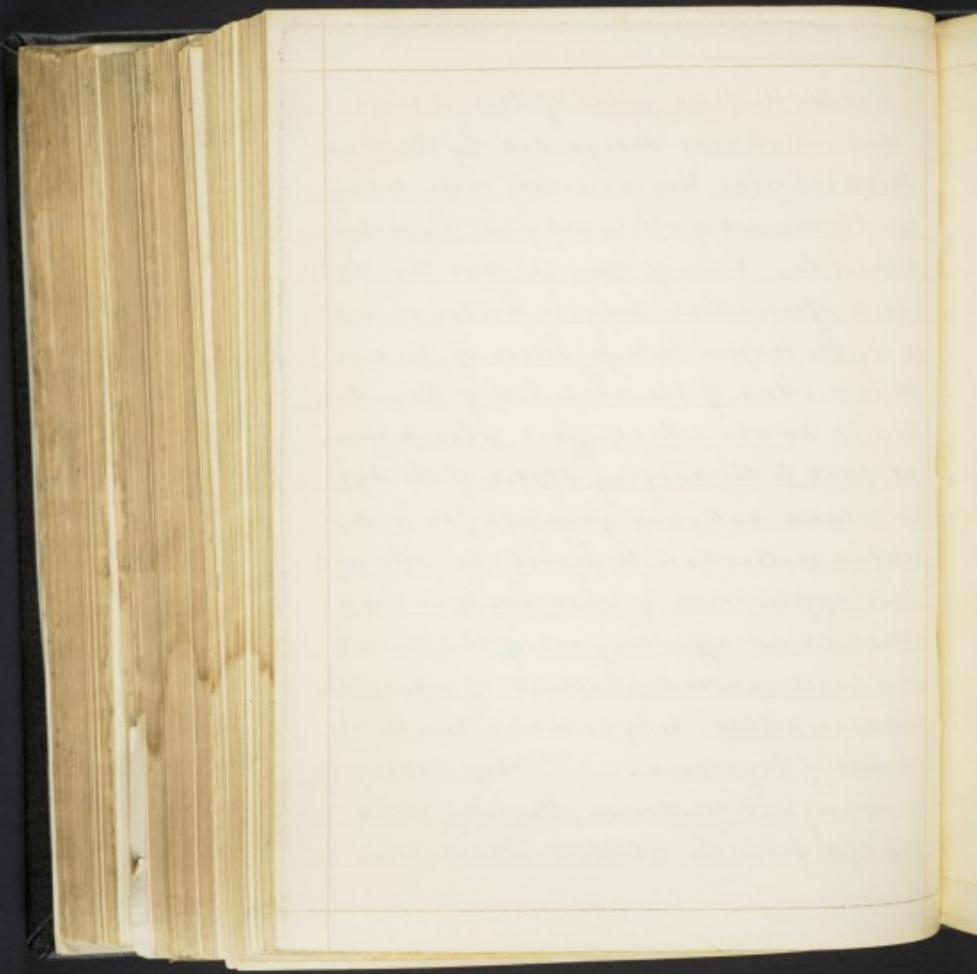


11

curative measures may be happily interposed with the most beneficial consequences: — as in the forming or fine stage of the most violent Severe, before the sympathies connecting together those organs whose healthy functions are of service to life have been fully established, before the chain of morbid association has been wrought throughout the system, the work of disorganization may be prevented by the well-directed efforts of the Physician. And, as there are cases, in which the recuperative energies of the system are prostrated at the very onset of disease, precluding all possibility of reaction: — so there are cases of mania, from whatever cause induced, in which the mind is so thoroughly distorded, as to be incapable of being reinstated.

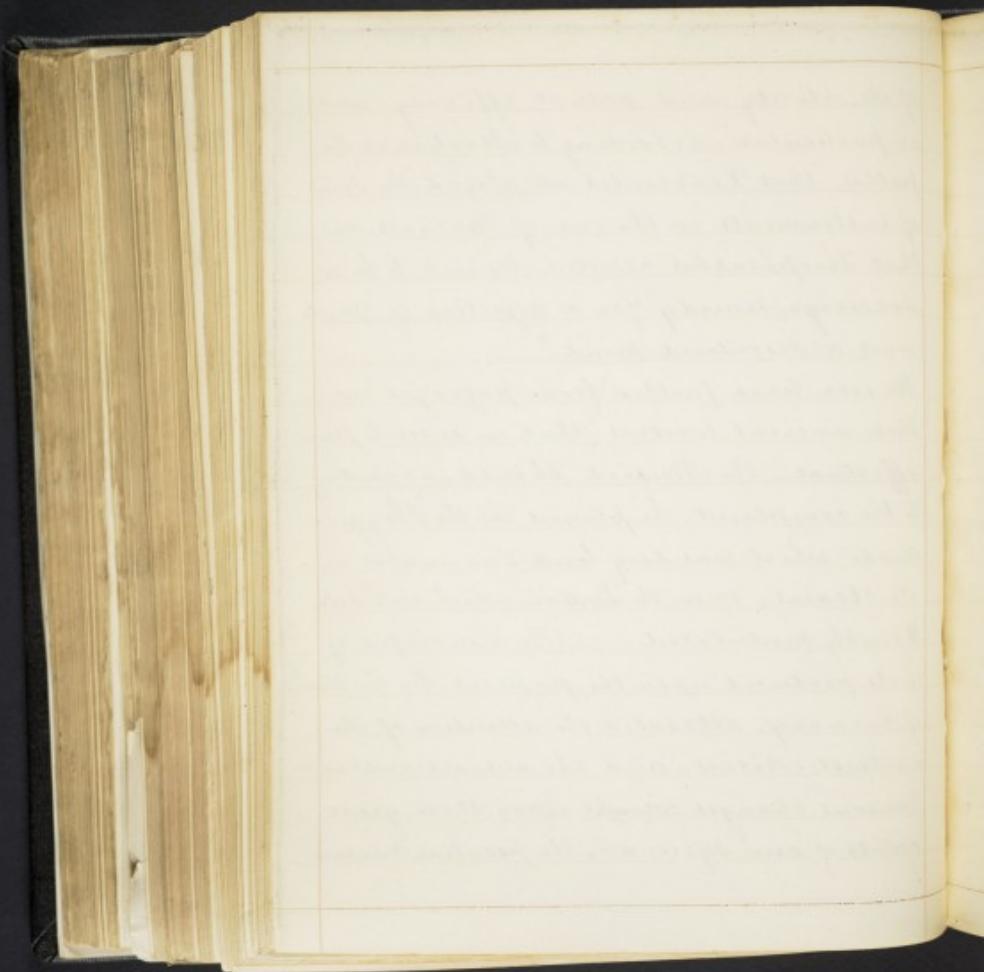


It is in the first grade of this disease,
— that which was designated by Rush as
Iristomania. It is variously included un-
der the names of Melancholia, Hypochon-
driasis &c. I am of opinion that the dis-
eased associations may be broken in up-
on by the proper interposition of Medical
Skill. And of the whole list of Remedies,
there is no one which effects, when properly
adapted to the varying states of the sys-
tem, more rational grounds for a suc-
cessful restoration to health than Musick.
This application of what has ever been
esteemed as affording one of the purest
and most exalted pleasures of which we
are susceptible, is by no means new in the
annals of Medicine. — Bishop Bussey
in his elegant treatise on Musick, cites
passages from the Classics illustrating



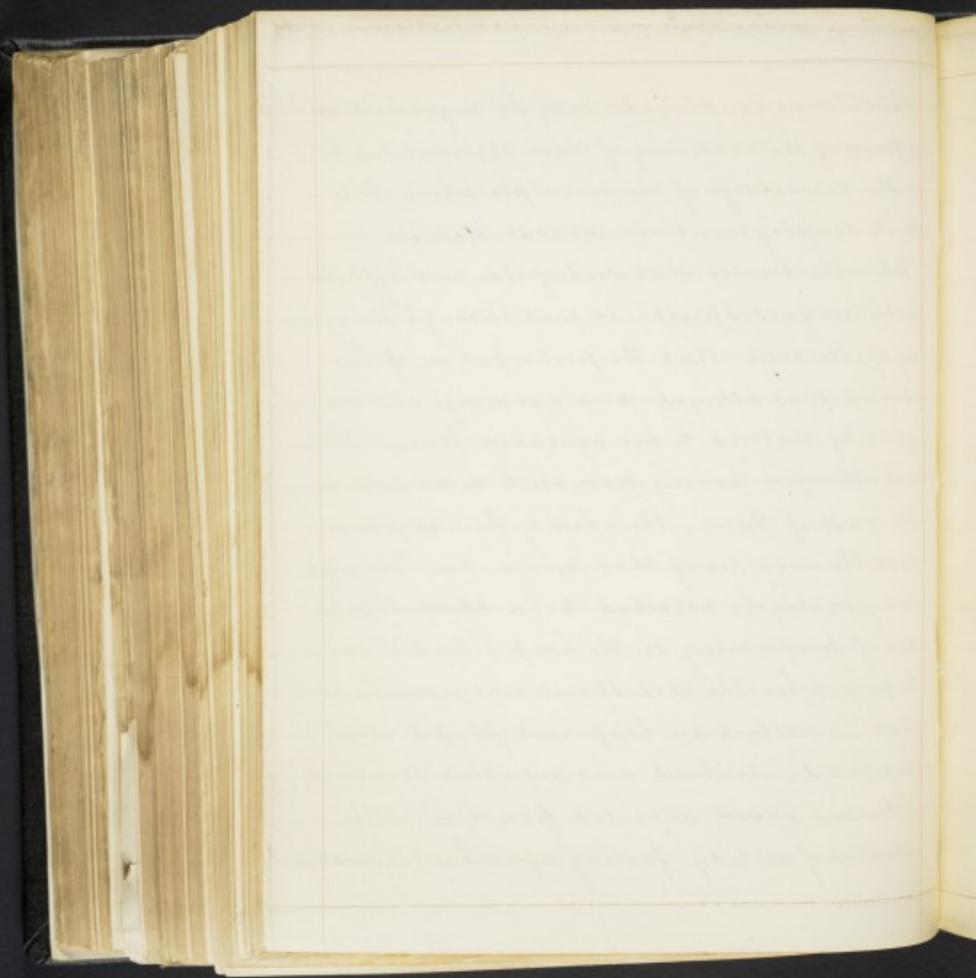
of its utility and actual efficacy: and in particular, according to Martianus Capella, "that Xenocrates employed the sound of instruments in the cure of Maniacs, and that Theophrastus asserted Musick to be a sovereign remedy for a dejection of spirits and a disordered mind."

We even learn further from passages in these ancient writers, that in order to prove effectual, the Musick should, according to the complaint, be played in the Phrygian Mode which was very loud & unmitigated in its strains, or in the Lydian which was soft & gently modulated. — The wonderful effects produced upon the passions by the strains of harmony, attracted the attention of the earliest writers, and the almost instantaneous changes wrought upon these great agents of our systems by the peculiar measure



which was employed may be urged both as a proof of the accuracy of their observations & of the correctness of the principle which led to its employment in mental disease.

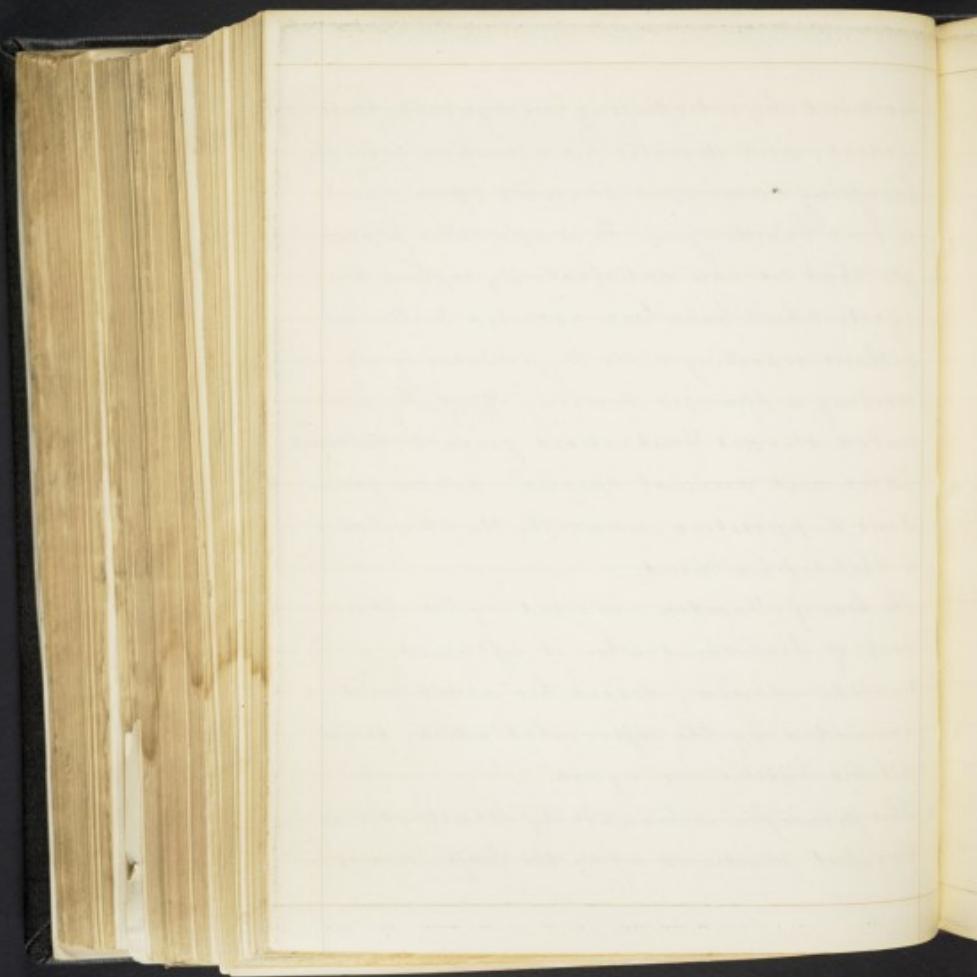
When the Jewish monarch of old was afflicted with an evil spirit, it was through the agency of Melchick that the perturbation of his mind was allayed and calmness and tranquility restored to his agitated frame. Without therefore having recourse to a miracle in the case of Saul, the whole of David's power over the disorders of that prince has been and may justly be ascribed to his skilful manner of performing on the harp. "And it came to pass when the evil spirit was upon Saul that David took an harp and played with his hand, so Saul was repushed soothing well & the evil spirit departed from him". — The strains of melody, falling upon his ear, soothed



his mind by introducing an agreeable train of ideas, and diverted his attention from the harassing cares and anxieties upon which it was brooding. — It is upon this principle that we can satisfactorily explain the effects which have been ascribed to Musick without resorting to the Hypotheses of its exerting a specific Soothing effect, "by well created strokes & vibrations given to the nervous fibres and animal Spirits" — a mere gratuitous supposition, unworthy the attention of a Philosophic mind.

The hero of Alaecon, excited by the Musick of Timotheus when it assumed a warlike strain, seized his arms and animated by the associated ideas, fought all his battles over again.

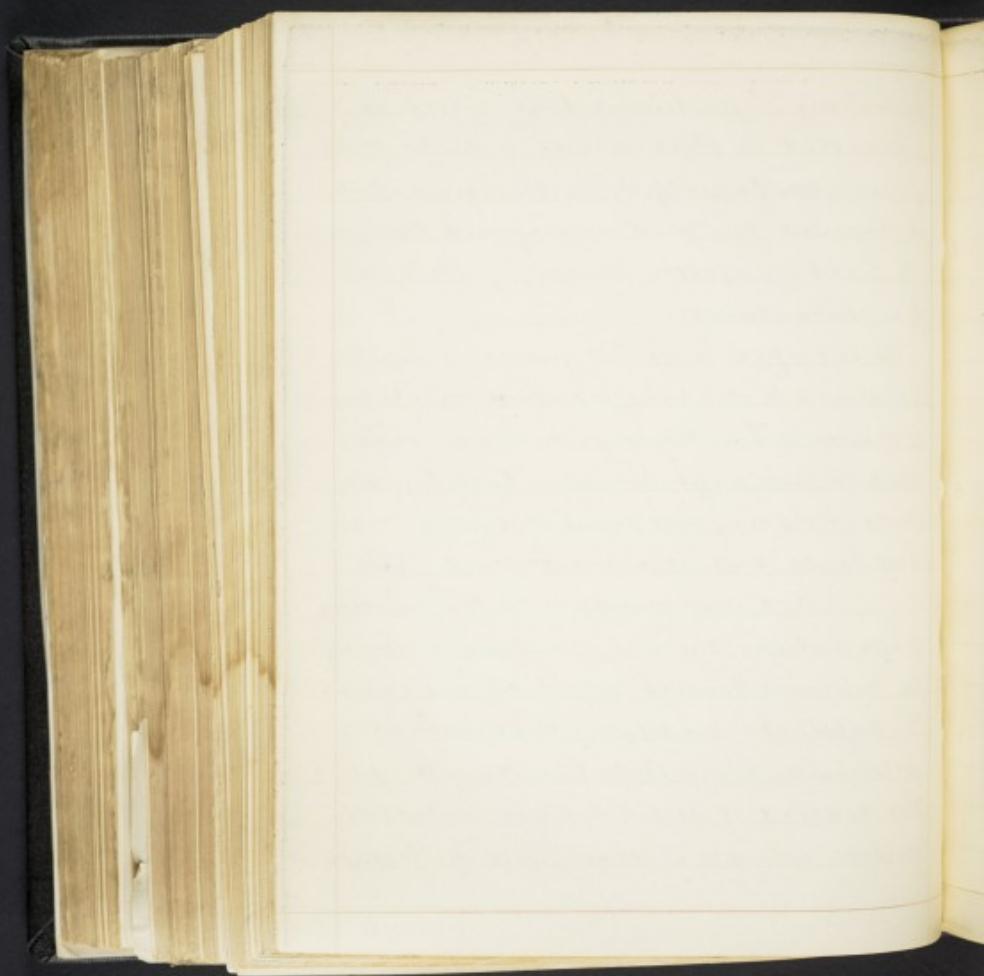
This principle is beautifully illustrated in the effect produced upon the Swiss soldiers



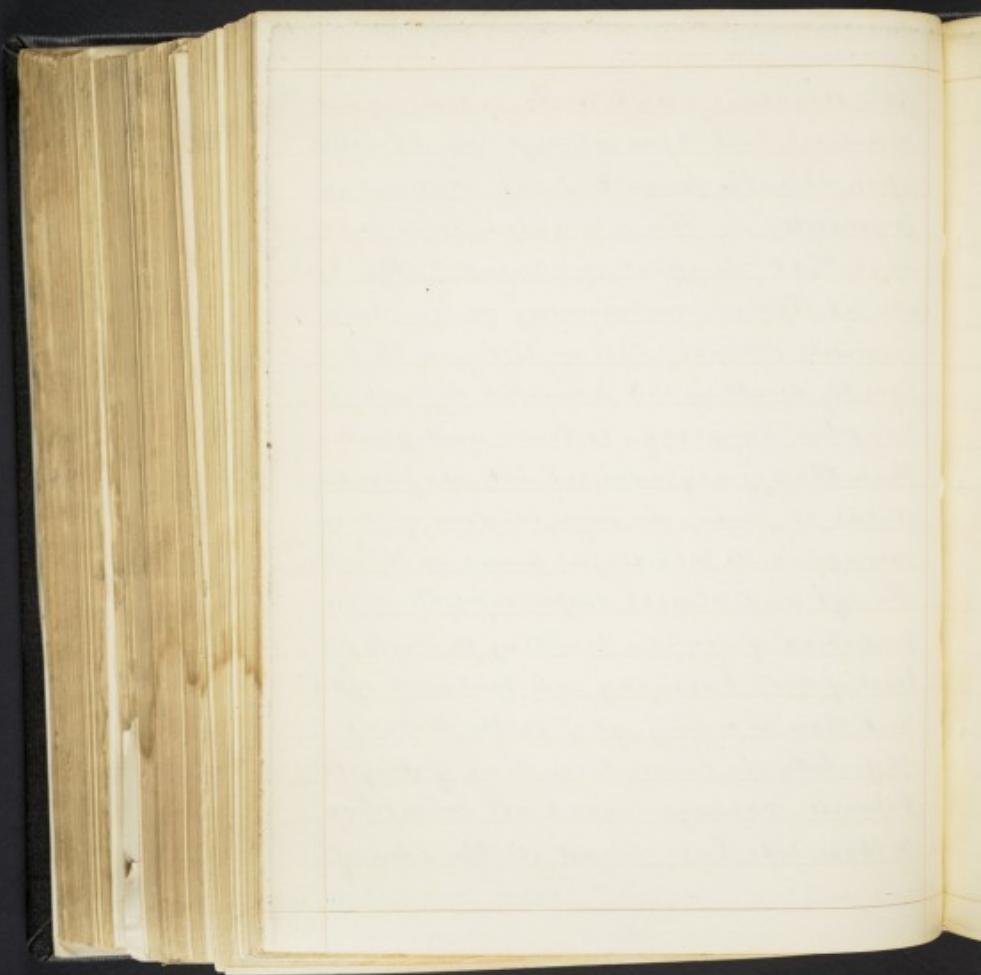
by hearing a particular tune which is connected in their minds with the scenes of juvenile felicity, when the buoyant spirit seemed free and unconfin'd through the wild majestic scenery of their native mountains.

"The intrepid Swiss that guards a foreign shore
Contemna to climb his mountain cliffs no more.
If chance he hear the song, so sweetly wild,
Which on these cliffs, his infant hours beguiled,
Meets at the long lost scenes that sound him nre,
And sinks a martyr to re-pendant sight".

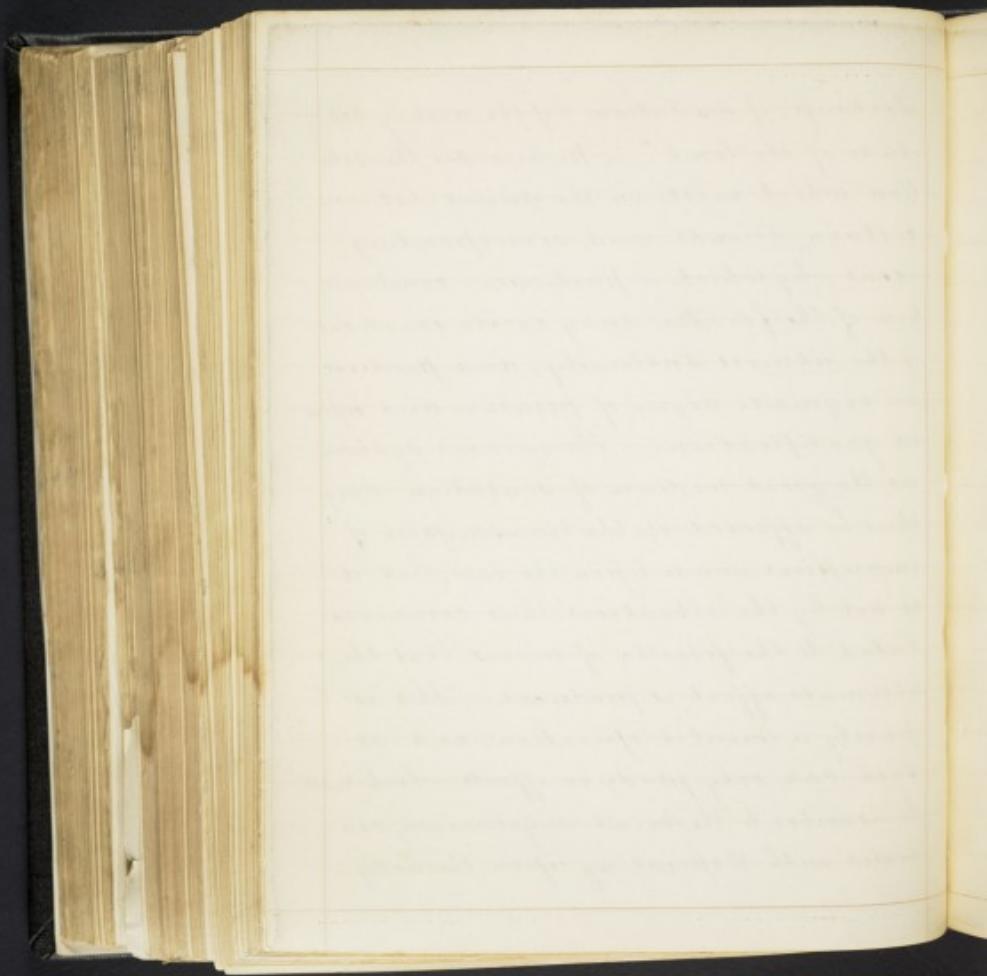
But, independant of the principle of association, there is a certain harmony in musical sounds which chimes in with the passions, modifying their actions & restraining their impetuosity. It is this concord of sweet sounds blended in unison, which has given rise to the raptus



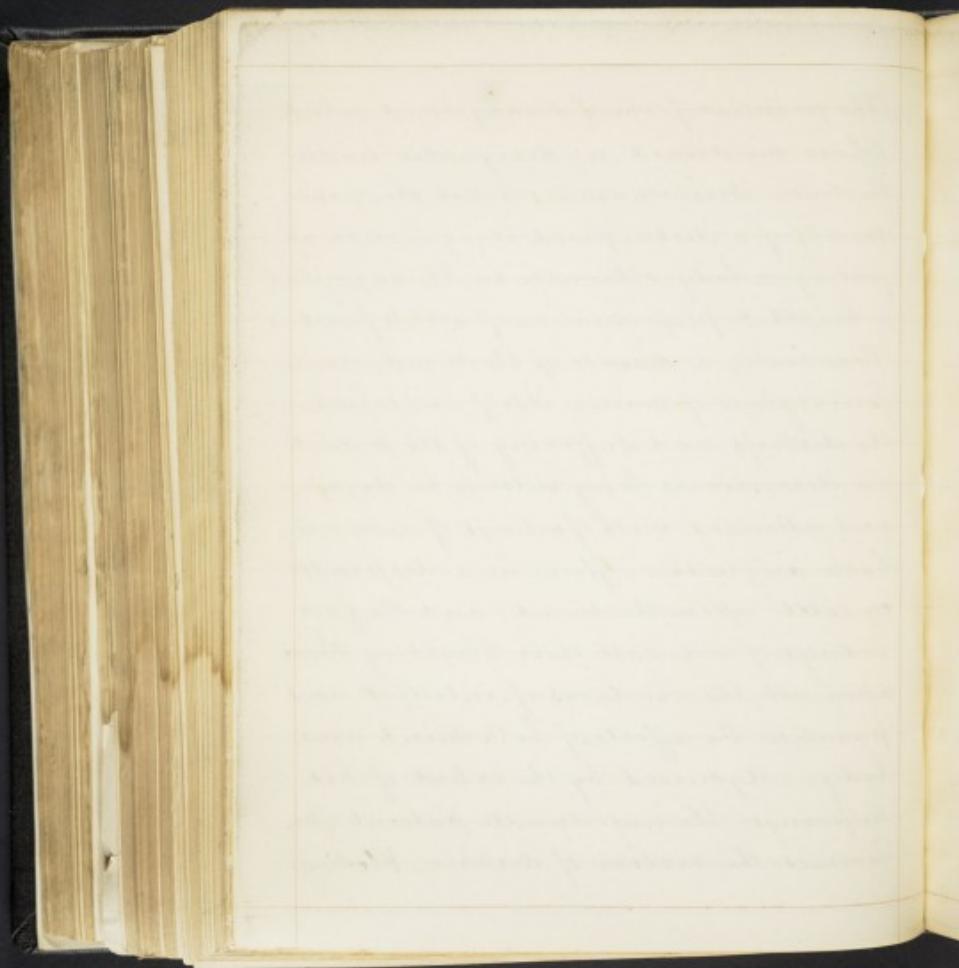
of the Amateur, and to the extravagant praises which have always been lavished upon this, the peerless of our sentient enjoyments. — The celebrated John Bell says that "the effect produced by the Sis were at Rome commencing in low, rich, exquisite strains, rising softly on the ear & gently swelling into powerful sounds of seraphic harmony, is finer and greater than that of any admired art; no painting, statue or poem, no imagination of man can equal its wonderful power on the mind. The soft and almost imperceptible accumulation of sound, swelling in most awful tones of rich harmony into powerful effect and then receding as if in the distant sky like the lamenting song of angels & spirits, conveys beyond all conception to those who have heard it, the idea of



darkness, of desolation & of the dreary solitude of the tomb." — We here see the relation which exists in the mind between certain sounds and corresponding ideas, by which a particular combination of the former may excite emotions of the utmost sublimity, and produce an exquisite degree of pleasure and refined gratification. The nervous system, as the great medium of sensation, may thus be affected in the transmission of impressions made upon the ear, but it is not by the vibrations thus communicated to the fibrilla of nerves that the ultimate effect is produced. This is purely a mental operation, and as such can only produce effects which must be ascribed to the mind, mysteriously connected with & operating upon the body.

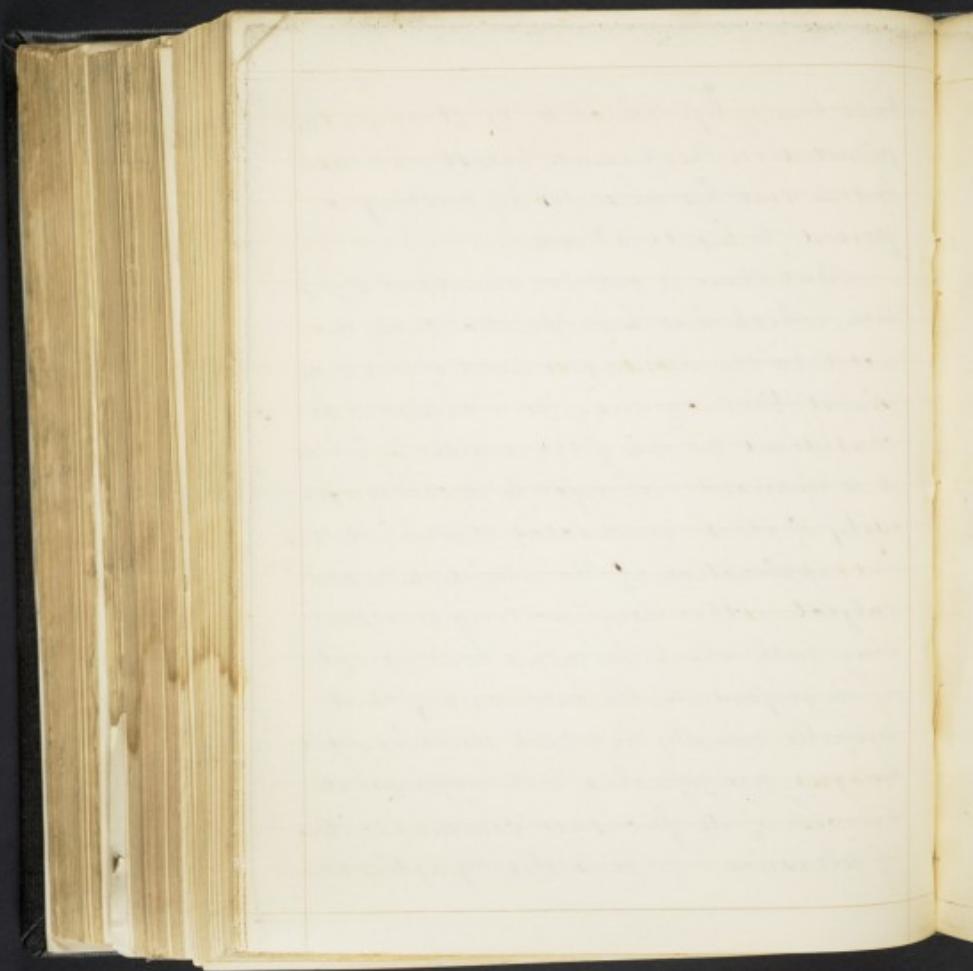


The peculiar form of derangement which I have mentioned as designated under the term *Dystimia*, is not the result merely of a distempered imagination of fearing a body otherwise in the enjoyment of health & performance of all its functions. It is really a disease of the mind, an inferior grade of mania itself, in which the distress and suffering of the patient are described as being intense in degree and attended with feelings of indescribable anguish. Gloom and despondency settle upon the mind, and the forebodings of evil cast their gloomy shade upon all the exertions of intellect and paralyze the efforts of both mind and body. Agonised by the extent of his sufferings the unfortunate patient often becomes the victim of despair, gloomy

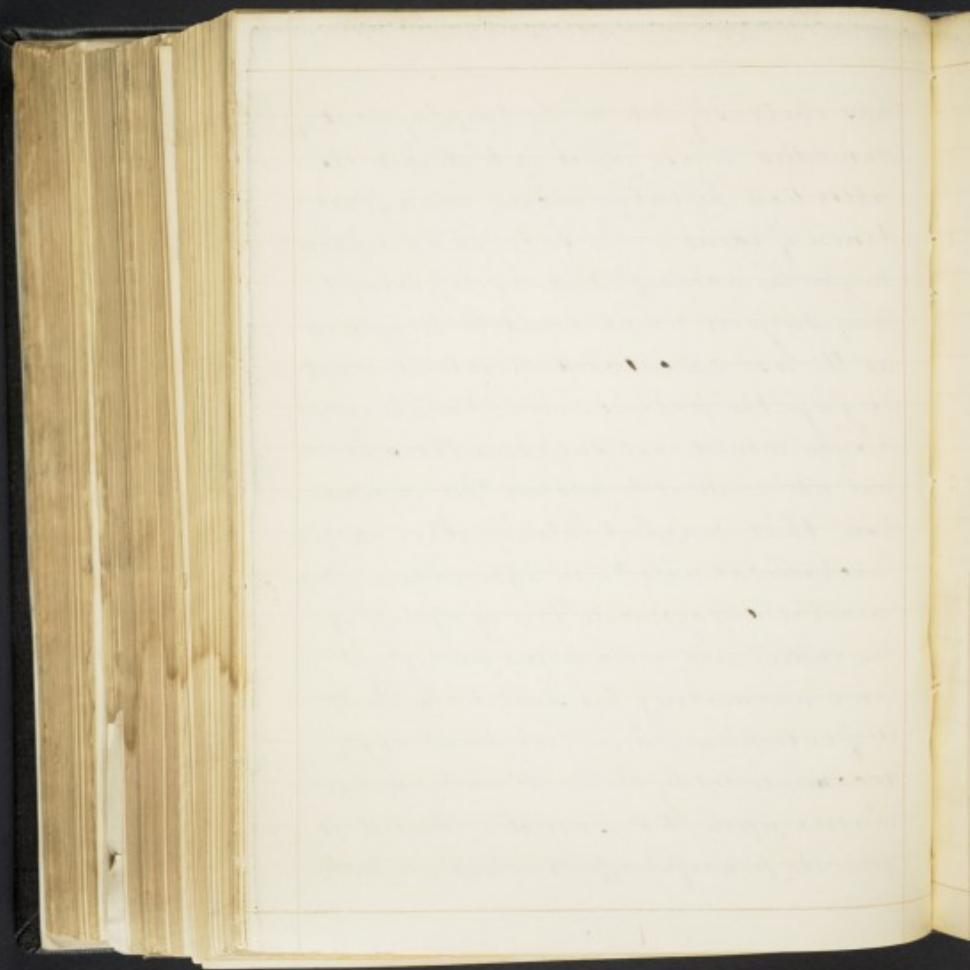


that love of life which is so strongly im-
planted in the human breast is compel-
led to end his miseries by putting a
period to his existence.

But there is one concomitant symp-
tom, which has been particularly no-
ticed in the commencement of this com-
plaint. Which may, in a measure, be
considered as one of the causes by which
it is induced. I refer to a constraintive
ility of ideas, contracted through the mo-
tive application of the attention to one
subject - either very exciting or depre-
sing, with which the mind becomes exclu-
sively engrossed to the exclusion of that
agreeable variety by which its exhausted
energies are refreshed & the appropriate
exercise of its faculties communicate
of pleasure. - It is this symptom which

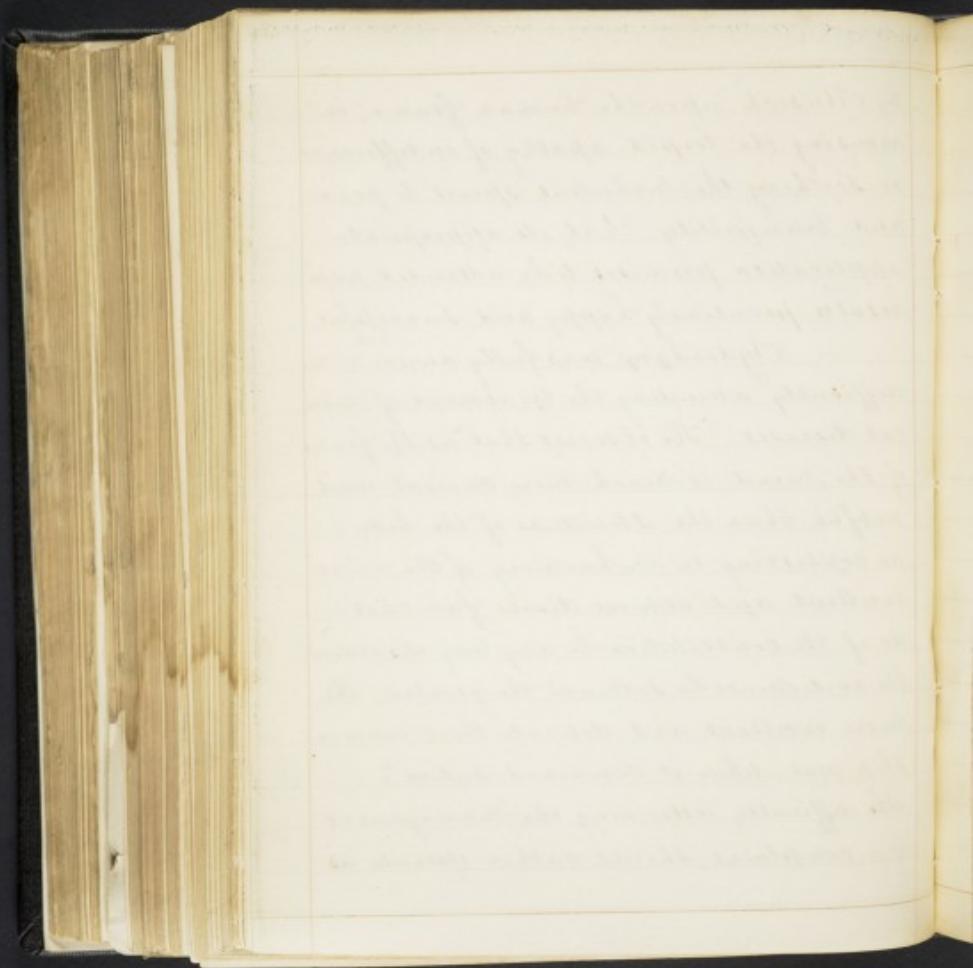


has obviously led to the employment of remedies whose object is to divert the attention by introducing an agreeable train of ideas. In fact, this intention might be accomplished by referring to any subjects which could be suggested as the best calculated to interest and engage the patient, even though experience would not sanction their habitual use. It is to answer this indication that manual labour either in the mechanical arts or in agriculture, commercial engagements &c, by agitating the individual with hopes and fears, and animating his soul with the spirit of enterprise, have been so strongly recommended by the most authoritative writers upon this subject. And it is from the powerful effects which are produced



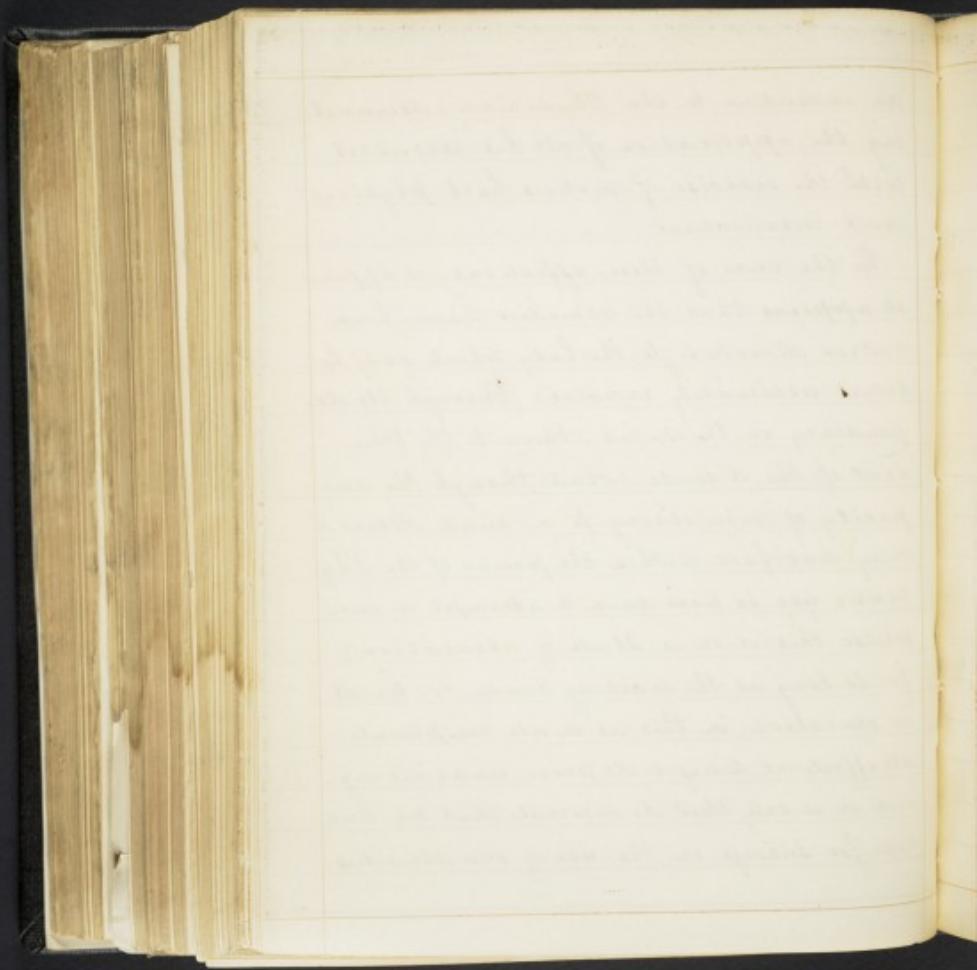
by Musick upon the human frame, in arousing the torpid apathy of indifference or soothing the turbulent spirit to peace and tranquility, that its appropriate application promises to be attended with results peculiarly happy and successful.

Sydenham was fully aware of the difficulty attending the treatment of mental diseases. He observes that "as the frame of the mind is much more curious and artful than the structure of the body, as consisting in an harmony of the most excellent and almost divine faculties; so, if the constitution be any way disordered, the evil must be so much the greater, the more excellent and delicate the workmanship was, while it remained entire". The difficulty attending the management of a complaint should rather operate as



an incentive to the Physician, demanding the application of all his resources with the exercise of motives both physical and intellectual.

In the cure of these affections, it appears it appears that the remedies have been rather directed to the body which only becomes ultimately involved through its dependency on the mind, than to the true seat of the disease. And though the capacity of ministering to a mind diseas'd may not fall within the power of the Physician, yet it were vain to attempt a cure whilst this is in a state of aberration; for so long as the exciting cause continues in operation, in this as in all complaints all efforts at relief will prove unavailing, and it is only thro' its removal that we can hope for success in the use of our remedies.



Musick, as an agent peculiarly calculated to effect this purpose from its obvious effects upon the constitution, merits particular attention. Certainly deserves an impartial trial. — Even though the cure be not radical, it may at least be the means of casting a gleam of pleasure into the sinner soul, of withdrawing the attention from subjects painful & distressing to the heart & of rendering a situation so truly deplorable, susceptible of some comfort & qualification.

For the Poet has said that,

"Musick the fiercest grief can charm,
And Tate's severest rage disarm;
Musick can soften pain to ease,
From madness and despair release;
Our joys below, it can improve
And antedate the 'bliss above'."

